Writings of St. Raphael of Lesvos

Compiled by Father Demetrios Serfes

Icon of St. Raphael, Nicholas & Irene - 20th c. St. Anthony's Monastery - (1RN10) - Uncut Mountain Supply

Apolytikion in honour of St. Raphael
Since the discovery of thy divine relics, O wise one, Lesvos hath been filled with the Grace which hath been given in thee abundantly; for thou, O hosiomartyr Raphael, dost appear wondrously to many persons, and dost provide cures; wherefore we who are believers rejoice thy marvels.

Apolytikion in honour of all three Saints
RAPAHEL, NICHOLAS AND IRENE
Having contended on Lesvos for the sake for Christ God, you have sanctified the island since the discovery of your sacred relics, O blessed ones; wherefore we honor you, O God-bearing Raphael, together with Nicholas and virgin Irene, as our divine protectors and intercessors with the Lord.

Kontakion
Let all of us honor as our protectors and miracle-workers the holy Martyrs who manifestly contended for Christ, whose sacred relics were hidden under the earth for many years, and who have manifested themselves to us in wondrous ways: Raphael, Nicholas, and divine Irene, as well as those who contended with them in a godly-minded manner.

Megalynarion
Let us honour with hymns the Hosiomartyrs of Christ, divine Raphael and venerable Nicholas, together with Irene, the guardians of Lesvos, for helping us.

What is an Apolytikion?
Apolytikion is a liturgical hymn referring to the feast celebrated and is sung at the end of the services and before the Apolysis (the apolysis is the last blessing of the celebrant at the end of the Divine Liturgy or other service by which he invokes upon the congregation the blessings of God through the prayers of the Theotokos and the principal Orthodox saints)thus actually being the dismissal hymn of the ceremony. It may refer to a particular event in the life of Christ, to the Mother of God, or to other saints, the memory of whom is celebrated by the service. Apolytikia (plural) are considered to be some of the most ancient liturgical anthems, succinctly referring to the nature of the celebration. Those in particular referring to feasts devoted to Christ, such as the Resurrection anthem Christ is Risen..., are the briefest and most ancient.

What is a Kontakion?
Kontakion originally meant a vellum (leather) roll of liturgical prayers wound around a piece of wood (dowel). Lather, a Kontakion came to signify a hymn in several strophes (stanzas) sung at an early point in the Divine Liturgy. Today, Kontakion is read or sung in practically all

the services and after the Apolytikion, the Kontakion of the feast of the day, whether referring to Christ, the Mother of God or to a saint, is sung.

(**Source for terms:** *A DICTIONARY OF GREEK ORTHODOXY*, by Rev. Nicon D. Patrtiancos., Hellenic Heritage Publications, Pleasantville, New York., 1987, p.36 and p. 226)

A Brief Introduction Of Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene of Lesvos, and The Writings of St. Raphael

Humbly, with the love of Jesus Christ, I present to you a brief introduction to the life of Ss. Raphael, Nicholas and Irene of Lesvos, as well as the writings of St. Raphael. For further readings of the lives of these holy martyrs in our holy Orthodox Church, I recommend spiritually that you obtain the book: *Modern Orthodox Saints Vol. 10: Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene of Lesvos*, written by Dr. Constantine Cavarnos. One can get this spiritually rewarding book at Holy Cross Seminary Bookstore, 50 Goddard Avenue, Brookline, Massachusetts.

This book presents one of the most astonishing true stories ever told. It is about the life, character, message and miracles of three Saints who suffered martyrdom by the Turks on the historic island of Lesvos in 1463, ten years after the fall of Constantinople, and began manifesting themselves in 1959 to many persons - men, women and children. These Martyrs are Raphael, Abbot of a monastery at the site called Karyes near the village of Thermi, Lesvos, his Deacon Nicholas, and the twelve-year-old Virgin Irene, daughter of the mayor of Thermi, who happened to be at the monastery with her parents when the Turks invaded it.

Five hundred years after their martyrdom, they began appearing to many residents of Thermi and nearby villages in dreams and visions. They revealed the cruel tortures to which they were subjected at the monastery, rendering it, in the words of St. Raphael, a "Second Golgotha." They offered guidance for the excavations there, which led to important finds. St. Raphael has been calling people to repentance, giving spiritual counsel and consolation, and curing every kind of disease.

Dr. Constantine Cavarnos' story begins with events that took place at Karyes and Thermi earlier this century, proceeds with those that occurred during 1959-1962, when important finds were made at Karyes, and ends with the present time. His story is based on actual visits he made in 1961 and subsequent years to Karyes, Thermi and neighbouring villages, where he interviewed the key persons to whom the Saints manifested themselves, as well as on many remarkable books.

Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene of Lesvos contains, besides Prof. Cavarnos' story about them, which appears chiefly in the first and longest chapter, hymns in honour of these Saints, (see above) their life told by St. Gerasimos Mikrayannanitis of Mount Athos briefly but in the eloquent and moving style of traditional Orthodox biographies of saints, accounts of many miraculous cures effected by St. Raphael, spiritual counsels by him, (see below) a chapter by Dr. Cavarnos on lessons we learn from these Saints and one with reflections on the same subject by the renowned writer and icon painter Photios Kontoglou.

SPIRITUAL COUNSELS OF ST. RAPHAEL

1. Christ and We
Only where Christ dwells is there blessedness. Where Christ blesses, there is heavenly repose. Where Christ turns His benevolent gaze, there is inexpressible true joy. Christ, with His unceasing love for us and His great humility, loves us and invisibly reproves us and reminds us through His miracles that there is life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. The Path of Christ
The path of Christ is somewhat difficult, but with patience, will, and humility, one makes progress... It involves tribulation and suffering, without which it is not possible for one to find the path open for the benefit of his soul.

3. Repentance and Regeneration
When a person is in a state of bondage to sin and has as an obstacle sadness and cannot concentrate, it means that he is without the regeneration of our Saviour Jesus Christ and is far from Him.

But when a man "comes to himself" and feels that his soul is far from God and becomes aware of his sinfulness, and with tears of repentance entreats our Heavenly Father to forgive him and bring him back to the heavenly joy of our Christ, then the regeneration of his soul takes place.

4. Care of the soul
When a Christian exercises watchful care, he heals his soul and does not allow it to be lost....Do not let your soul go astray in matter, in the corruptible things of the world. Life has no value if we do not take care of the soul. Therefore, do not let yourselves go astray and lose your soul. Read the Gospels carefully because they were written with the Grace and the glory of God, to be read by the faithful that their life might shine.

On days when a Saint is celebrated, Christians ought to pray more ardently, with contrition and love, and entreat the Saint to intercede with God for the salvation of their souls. The feast day of every Saint is a serious reminder for Christians of the great sufferings which the Saints experienced for the sake of Christ's faith. They were glorified by God, and with glory, they received a place in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us then honour the Saints and invoke their help, in order that they might strengthen us in our prayer. And we may rest assured that our prayer will be heard by God.

A guileless spirit is one which has no badness within it. Badness is a characteristic of the evil one, who seeks by means of wickedness to divert man from the path of virtue and from God. Consequently, great carefulness and effort are needed in order that there might reign in the soul a guileless and pure spirit.

How much care do people exercise in order to save their soul? What medicines do they use in order to protect it from the microbes of sin, which threaten and attack it? And yet, the Lord has indicated the medicines: love, warm prayer, and humility. They must employ all of them, seeking at the same time the help of God, through which alone can the soul be regenerated and be freed from the microbes of sin...Sin must be banished from the soul: greed, rapacity, impatience, improper imagination.

Examine yourself and strive to adorn yourself with love, humility, compassion, and hope. Seek the regeneration of your soul, enlightened by the voice of the Gospel and helped by God. With fear and love for the Heavenly Father, proceed to sow the seeds of God's word on good soil. Cultivate the talent given by Christ for the salvation of your soul.

5. We ought to obey God

In order to advance in the path of Christ, one needs besides other basic things, complete obedience to the Commandments of God.

Follow the straight path which has been charted by our Lord Jesus Christ, and do not allow yourselves to be encircled by sin...Today's path, which is followed by various societies, is directed towards sin. The cause of this is the development of civilisation - of wrongly conceived civilisation - towards which the various leaders are striving by diverse means to direct mankind, trying to create a new way of life, different from that prescribed by the Lord.

6. Love your fellow men and forgive them

Among your religious duties is that of loving your fellow men and always forgiving them. If you do this, you will be filled with joy and health both of the soul and of the body.

Forgive and pray, in order to live your life serenely. And do not do to others that which you do not want them to do to you, or return the evil which they have done to you.

Good deeds and love for one's neighbour will result in a holy end for everyone who inwardly supplicates: "Save me, my Christ." Through love and prayer, he will be saved.

You have and eat; give each day to someone who is poor to eat also.

7. Ask God to forgive you
Always entreat the Creator to forgive you. He knows all the hidden deeds and thoughts which people do not confess, perhaps from shame, from a lack of strength to tell the truth.

8. Cultivate patience
Patience is a heavenly gift, a gift from the Heavenly Father...With patience and love for your fellow men, you become a victor in life's continual trials.

When there is no patience, all goodness in the soul is quickly suppressed, and sin grows. Patrience adorns the soul with diamonds which are not of the earth but belong to the Jerusalem that is Above.

Patience increases obedience to the Divine words that have been written, are being written, and will be written.

PATIENCE IS LOVE AND OBEDIENCE.
Exercise patience out of love for your fellow man. Exercise patience in order to benefit your soul. For it you do not take yur soul into consideration, you lose your patience.

PATIENCE INCREASES WHEN A PERSON TAKES IN ACCOUNT GOD.
Patience must grow and not diminish, because when it diminishes, sin increases in the life of man, and evil results.

Patrience is a sweet word. Patience is a sweet breath. Patience is an invincible weapon. Patience is a priceless adornment of man. Patrience is a blessing of God.

When our Lord Jesus Christ was in His earthly life and taught the crowds, if He did not have patience within Himself what would have happened? He came to earth in order to save the lost sheep and to uplift us through His patience, and then to go up to Golgotha for us who are unworthy and careless.

Patience reigns quietly and fruitfully in the life of the man who does not harm or endanger anyone, who is content with little, and who is obedient to the commandments of the Heavenly Father.

9. Have faith
Have faith that is as unshakeable as a rock, so that nothing frightens you...The person who has deep faith within himself, and fixes his attention on the good path, and seeks to improve the condition of his soul and to adapt his thought to the good, is happy... The happiness of man consists in faith in God and in good acts which are done with love.

We cure those who believe in us and come to us with faith.

1**0. Cultivate humility**
STRIVE TO ACQUIRE DEEP HUMILITY.

A good Christian loves his fellow men, helps the poor, and is very humble.

11. Keep the ordained fasts
The Holy Fast of Forty Days (tessarakoste - "Great Lent") is the greatest fast, one which every Christian must observe without grumbling. A person who possesses bodily health must not protest about the fast, and he is inexcusable if he does not keep it.

During the forty-day period of the fast, a Christian ought to attend church services regularly. A person must also keep the fast of Wednesday and Friday.

During the great fast of the first fifteen days of August, some persons wore black clothes in order to honour the Theotokos. But if this is not accompanied by fasting and by prayer, it is in vain.

12. Confess and receive Holy Communion
Confess, and receive Holy Communion so long as you practice love towards your fellow men and do for them all the good that lies within your power. This is therapeutic for both the soul and the body.

13. Read religious books
WHAT BOOKS DO YOU READ? READ RELIGIOUS BOOKS.

In all our undertakings in life we should begin with a read of the Gospel. Christians who want to show obedience to the word of God should read regularly and study carefully, word for wor, the Law of the Gospel, endeavoring to understand it fully, dwelling more on those words which

of essential import. Study the Acts of the Apostles.... All the heralds of Christ, that is, the Apostles and the Saints, had wisdom which they acquired through the descent upon them of the Holy Spirit.

Read the Salutations to the Theotokos.

14. Pray
REPENT AND PRAY. DO NOT NEGLECT PRAYER. PRAY FERVENTLY.

Say these prayers:
"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
"Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us."
"Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit."
"We venerate Thine immaculate icon..."
"The Cross, the guardian of the whole oecumene..."
The Creed and the Lord's Prayer... "O All-Holy Lady Theotokos (the light of my darkened soul, my hope and protection)..."

And whatever other prayer you know.

15. Missionary activity
The compassionate soul loves, helps, consoles, shares the suffering of an afflicted fellow human being. It works for the spreading of the Gospel, motivated by love for the sinner. We ought to feel sorrow within our souls for persons who live far from God.

The stand of the Lord towards Zacchaeus should serve as a lesson for Christians. Through His stand the Lord showed that we ought to embrace sinners with our love and not to avoid them. It shows us that we ought to seek the power of God to bring them to the rengeneration which is effected by our Savior Jesus Christ.

So let us approach sinners with love. And if in the end we do no succeed in bringing them close and fully to the path of God, let us even then not cease praying for them. Perhaps our fervent prayer will be listened to by our compassionate God and He will grant to them the regeneration of their soul.

16. Profitableness of the Christian life
Happy is the Christian who studies and follows the teaching of Christ. He is happy in this temporary life and in the life after death. Yes, he will be happy after death, because the soul does not vanish after death, is not perishable like the body, but continues to live, to exist. Through death, it is simply separated from the perishable body.

(**Source:** *Modern Orthodox Saints Volume 10: Raphael, Nicholas and Irene of Lesvos*, by Constantine Cavarnos, INSTITUTE FOR BYZANTINE AND MODERN STUDIES, Belmont, Massachusetts, 1990, pp. 145-155.)

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